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The End of an Era: Asia Two Years After the Fall of Indochina

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[1976]

REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (~~U.S. SENATOR~~)

THE END OF AN ERA

ASIA--~~2~~ YEARS^{to Two + two days} AFTER THE FALL OF INDOCHINA

Mr. President:

On April 10, 1975, in an address to a joint session, President Ford asked the Congress to approve an additional \$1 billion in military and economic aid for South Vietnam. The next day American Embassy personnel were evacuated from Phnom Penh. The end of an era was at hand. By the last of that month it was all over. In Saigon and Phnom Penh, the governments of Generals Thieu and Lon Nol were out and new governments were in. Thus ended the final chapter in the disastrous policy to contain a non-aggressive China.

Where do we stand in Asia ^{to Two + two days} a year later? What lessons have been learned from this attempt to ~~interfere in~~ ^{interfere in} vast lands and peoples half way around the globe? It is time to take stock.

Since President Nixon's visit to Peking in 1972, winds of change have blown throughout Asia. After more than two decades of hostility and confrontation, the United States and China began the journey to normalization of relations, a journey far from completed. At last our nation's policy is now grounded on the fact that the United States is not an Asian power but a Pacific power. The difference is more than semantic. It is the difference between a sensible acceptance of the realities of Asia and the dangerous illusions of military omnipotence. What takes place in this vast region is of concern to Americans. But concern and control are quite different matters.

Simply stated, America's principal long-range interests in the Far East are to avoid domination of the region by any single power, to maintain friendly relations with China, Japan and other nations and to lessen tensions which could trigger either a local or a great power conflict in the area.

Let us first look at the People's Republic of China, the home for one quarter of the people on this globe. President Nixon's journey was only the first step on the path to normalization of relations with China. The Shanghai Communiqué was not a document of flesh and blood. It was a skeleton to which the sinews were to be added by both countries. In the ^{five} ~~four~~ years since that document was issued, some flesh has been added in the form of trade, cultural, educational and scientific exchanges and visits to China by government officials, including members of Congress. But the basic myth of the old China policy, the obstacle to normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China, remains. The United States, ^{officially,} ~~officially,~~ still treats the government of Taiwan as the government of China.

The pertinent provision in the Shanghai Communiqué reads:
The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U. S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.

I interpret the Shanghai Communique to mean that the United States recognized that the Chinese civil war was over and that the eventual goal was full and formal normalization of relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States. *So did former Pres. Nixon + so did Chou - en Lai*

President Ford said in Honolulu ^{on} ~~last~~ December 7, 1975, that on his recent visit to China he "reaffirmed the determination of the United States to complete the normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China on the basis of the Shanghai Communique." *+ so so have all Amer. Pres. send*

The Shanghai Communique stated that the U. S. would "progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes." With the end of the war in Indochina, "tension in the area" which, conceivably, could have justified retention of United States forces on Taiwan ended. But there are still ^{approx. 1500} ~~some 25,000~~ American servicemen on that island, down from 10,000 in 1972.

In addition to the regular forces, the United States maintains a military advisory mission to advise the Taiwan forces on how best to fight the forces of the People's Republic. We also continue to supply Taiwan with large quantities of weapons, \$611 million worth over the last four years, much of that financed on long-term government credits. ^{last} The Administration proposed to sell \$182.5 million more in military equipment to Taiwan by the end of ^{this} ~~the next~~ fiscal year, \$43 million of that on credit.

Looking ^{East} ~~West~~ ward, the partnership between the United States and Japan is the fundamental pillar of American policy in Asia. Japan and the United States are military partners. Japan's continued trust in the validity of the United States security commitment is essential to the maintenance of stability throughout the region because a Japan embarked in search of security on its own by way

of a major military expansion would unsettle all of Asia. Japan is almost wholly dependent on foreign raw materials to supply its greatly expanded industrial plant. Asian memories of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere are still not forgotten. There ^{have been} ~~are now~~ pressures from the Pentagon for Japan to expand its military forces. I urge the greatest caution in pushing Japan in such a direction. There ought not to be grounds for Japan to have to doubt the U. S. security guarantee and no compelling reason for the Japanese to make a significant change in their defense policy. Any other course, in my judgment, is playing with fire in the Western Pacific.

I ^{was} ~~am~~ deeply concerned about the fallout from the Lockheed affair on U. S.-Japan relations. This episode and other recent examples of payoffs in shady American business deals abroad demonstrate the need for reforms inside this nation and an international code of business ethics. This is an appropriate problem for the United Nations to tackle. Both buying and selling nations should unite to seek a remedy to cure the dry rot which now afflicts international business dealings.

As to the present situation, it ^{was} ~~is~~ in the interest of all concerned that American and Japanese officials handled the problem in such a manner as to minimize the adverse impact on our relationship. Maintenance of a close partnership with Japan should continue to have the highest priority in U. S. policy toward Asia.

Korea, the last remnant of the failure of U. S. policy in Asia, is a time bomb which must be defused. The United States' objective should be to bring about a settlement between the two.

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The United States must do more than it has in the past to break the impasse in Korea. We should have learned from the long and costly efforts to contain the People's Republic of China that quarantine is a reaction, not a substitute for a positive policy which seeks to solve a problem. It is in the interest of the Korean people, North and South, for the United States and world peace, that contact be made between the two Koreas to help to minimize the risk of military clash and to facilitate an accommodation between North and South.

In Southeast Asia, the foremost task for U. S. policy remains to recognize the realities in Indochina. The ^{lost} Administration's policy of opposition to trade and commercial relations with Vietnam or Cambodia, and the failure to send an Ambassador to Laos has something ~~in it of the ostrich complex.~~

The fact is that just as China was not ours to lose in 1949, neither was Indochina a quarter of a century later. That was not the tragedy for us. The tragedy was that the war was allowed to ^{begin and to} continue so long and ^{that} so many lives were needlessly lost.

Although the shooting war is over, economic warfare continues as a cornerstone of U. S. policy. There is no way that a unilateral U. S. trade embargo against Vietnam or Cambodia can be effective in a competitive world. Containment is not a policy. It is only a petulant reaction. It is time that the United States act toward the governments of Indochina, which have regained their independence,

in a spirit which seeks to heal the wounds of war. Like it or not, a unified Vietnam, ~~as North and South will ultimately become~~, will be a major force in Southeast Asia. It is in our long-range interest to accommodate to this fact and make the best out of the new situation.

I share the desire of all Americans to learn whatever can be learned of the missing in action in Indochina. But we can hardly expect to do so by refusing to have anything to do with the new governments of Laos, South Vietnam, or Cambodia. The most effective way to obtain information about the MIA's, I should think, is through face-to-face, on-the-spot official dealings ^{as the Indo-China mission} ~~N~~ That is not likely ^{attempted} without normalization of diplomatic and other relations. ~~It is my~~ ^{To do} ~~understanding that~~ ^{lost} ~~The Administration~~ ^{month} has decided to open talks with Vietnam on the range of issues between us, and that is certainly a step in the right direction.

In Thailand, the United States faces a delicate situation. The question of a continued American military presence had become a major issue in internal politics, a further manifestation of the forces of nationalism at work in Southeast Asia. All United States forces, except for a small military assistance group, have been ordered to leave the country, ~~within the next four months~~, thus bringing to a close an attempt to maintain a second military toe-hold on the Asian Mainland. The action taken by the ~~Kubrit~~ ^{Khmer} ~~Thai~~ government, is both in their interest and in the interests of the American people.

Before the
last military
corp

The closing of the U. S. bases may help to improve the prospects for an easing of tensions between Thailand and North Vietnam, an arrangement much to be desired. What the ^{PRESENT} ~~new~~ Thai government will do remains to be seen.

~~The remnants of U. S. military involvement,~~ ^A smouldering insurgency in the Northeast, a genuine fear of North Vietnam's intentions, and the continued existence of the SEATO treaty commitment to Thailand, the only country to which the treaty has practical application, all add up to a sensitive and volatile situation for the United States in Thailand.

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, there are no major policy problems. Burma continues to go its own way and its government has no desire to open its doors to large-scale foreign economic intervention, by the United States or any other country. There is in Burma, however, a danger that over-zealous and costly pursuit of poppies may result not so much in the lessening of the supply of dangerous drugs but in involving this nation in Burma's internal affairs and the continued fight of the government against various insurgencies. A close rein should be kept on anti-narcotics activities, both there and elsewhere in the region. In the Philippines, the outstanding problem concerns the terms for continued use of the military bases at Clark and Subic Bay, ^{both necessary as our outer line of defense in the Pacific.} Appropriate recognition of Philippine sovereignty is the issue here. Negotiations to meet this issue ^{have} ~~were~~ begun ~~yesterday~~ between the two countries. I believe that a mutually satisfactory agreement can be reached, given the fact that we want to stay and the Philippine government wants us to stay.

U. S.-Indonesian relations are relatively trouble-free.

But this land of 140 million people has a growing gap between rich and poor which vast amounts of foreign aid, new oil revenues, and outside investments seem only to have accentuated.

In both the Philippines and Indonesia the debacle in Indochina, coupled with the change in U. S. policy toward China, has stimulated new interest in regional cooperation and a reappraisal of basic international relationships. As new relationships evolve in Southeast Asia, a new spirit of self-reliance and regional cooperation is emerging. It is in our own interest to encourage and accommodate to this new spirit. One of the most promising developments is the growth of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, comprised of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. This genuinely local arrangement, is showing much promise. Although the recent summit meeting of the heads of state did not produce any startling agreements, it did reaffirm a mutual desire to explore and develop common regional interests. Expanding its membership to include Burma and the nations of Indochina, a future possibility, would result in a region-wide organization of great potential. A regional zone of peace and freedom, encompassing all the nations of Southeast Asia, would be a giant step toward regional stability.

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," Santayana wrote. The era of military adventure on the Asian mainland is over. As a result of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, the American people now have a more realistic view of what, as a practical matter, we can and cannot do. They now know that it is not possible,

or even desirable, to remake ancient cultures in our own image. There is a sober realization of the limits of America's resources and power. As was true of America in the past, the America of the future will be the beacon to the world, not because of its military might or foreign aid diplomacy, but because of what it stands for in furthering human aspirations for freedom and a better way of life.

America is not becoming isolationist. There is, in fact, a growing awareness of the interdependence of the world and the need to tackle common problems on a multilateral basis. As U. N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim put it in a recent speech: "People are not turning away from ideas of world interdependence. What they are turning away from are out-moded and unworkable ways of trying to deal with the world."

today,
~~In summary,~~ I would say that, the United States position in Asia is more favorable than it has been since the end of World War II.

- We enjoy good relations with all nations except for North Korea and those in Indochina, which ^{until recently,} we ignored by choice.
- Both we and the nations of the region have a better understanding of what it takes to live in peace in a diverse world.
- There is no war.
- American troops, ^{except for So. Korea,} are coming home from the Asian Mainland.
- The economic burden of our overseas political involvement is lessening.

There is an agenda of unfinished business, to be sure.. But the problems are manageable. What is needed is the will to clear away

the remaining relics of out-dated policies and to face up to the present & the future and to learn from the past. *(And), speaking of the PAST of the past 34 years*